



# Analysis of Indirect Speech Acts in Toni Morrison's 'Beloved'

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## Abstract

*Speech act theory is a subfield of pragmatics that is concerned with the ways in which words are used not only to present information but also to carry out actions. The Nobel prize winner African American writer Toni Morrison has dealt with the subjects of violence, sacrifice, slavery, identity crisis, racial discrimination and many more throughout all her novels. Present study aims at examining the effects of indirect speech acts in her most celebrated novel 'Beloved' which depicts horrible situation of slavery in USA. It seeks to explore the dialogues in above mentioned novel to see how they have been used. The paper adopts Indirect speech act theory developed by J. R. Searle for the analysis. Only some of the highly marked speech acts will be used for the same. Indirect speech acts enable an interlocutor to convey beyond the boundaries of the words used. Searle's proposition is, in an indirect speech act, the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relaying on their mutually shared information, both linguistic and non- linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inferences on the part of the hearer. The study concludes that speech act theory is the most appropriate instrument to bring out to the fore the hidden meaning and the crucial aspects of the novel, and thereby, will increase the understanding and appreciation of her novels.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that a substantial gap exists between the literal meaning of a sentence and the nuanced meaning conveyed through its utterance. Furthermore, this meaning is subject to change depending on the context, imbuing language with a dynamic quality. This linguistic characteristic often goes unnoticed in conventional perspectives that treat language as a self-contained structure. Context, in essence, represents a multifaceted backdrop against which language usage occurs. Effective communication between interlocutors flows smoothly due to their shared linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural background. To truly comprehend words, one must delve beyond their surface and venture into the contextual realm to uncover the genuine meaning. One could liken the words

utilized to the visible tip of an iceberg, while the meaning corresponds to the vast submerged portion below.

Speech act theory provides a valuable lens through which to uncover the deeper layers of meaning in a novel. By examining the types of speech acts characters perform and the intentions behind their utterances, we gain insight into the complexities of relationships, emotions, and themes that may be otherwise hidden. speech act theory offers a comprehensive framework to examine the dynamic relationship between language, communication, and social interaction. It enriches our understanding of language use in diverse contexts and disciplines, enhancing our ability to navigate communication effectively and interpret meaning beyond the surface of words.

Toni Morrison (February 18, 1931 – August 5, 2019) was a renowned American novelist, essayist, editor, and professor. She is celebrated for her powerful and thought-provoking works that explore themes of race, identity, gender, and history. Morrison's writing often delved into the complexities of the African American experience, addressing both historical and contemporary issues. Throughout her career, Morrison used her platform to address issues of racism, social inequality, and the broader human experience. Her impact extended beyond her writing, as she also worked as an editor and educator, contributing to the growth of diverse voices in literature.

"Beloved" is a novel written by Toni Morrison that delves into the haunting aftermath of slavery on both individual lives and society. Set in the post-Civil War era, the story follows Sethe, a former slave who escaped to Ohio and now lives with her daughter Denver. The novel is deeply rooted in the African American experience, exploring themes of trauma, memory, quest for identity, and the lasting effects of slavery. The narrative takes a haunting turn when a mysterious young woman named Beloved arrives at Sethe's home, seemingly with a connection to her past. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Beloved is not just a physical presence, but also a symbol of the trauma and pain that Sethe and her community have endured. The novel weaves together past and present, revealing the horrors of slavery through flashbacks and the characters' recollections.

Within the novel's rich tapestry of language and communication, characters employ indirect speech acts as a means of conveying layered meanings. Indirect speech acts, characterized by the divergence between the literal meaning of the utterance and the intended meaning, offer a fertile ground for understanding characters' motivations, desires, and the complex relationships between them. This paper investigates the deployment of indirect speech acts in the novel, aiming to uncover the layers of communication that contribute to the story's depth.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous researchers have undertaken extensive investigations into the application of speech act theory across a diverse range of mediums, encompassing novels, dramas, movies, and speeches which shows similarity with the one under study.

Kalejaiye (2021) conducted research on 'A speech act analysis of Obama's speech: Politics and Faith'. This research delved into the speech acts employed by Obama to validate his ideological stance on religion within his 2006 political speech titled 'Faith and Politics'. The investigation employed Allan's speech act model, which traces its origins back to Austin's work. The findings of the study reveal that

Obama predominantly utilized direct assertive acts, along with indirect verdictives and requesitive acts. The study's conclusions align with the notion that a blend of religion and politics, encompassing faith, verifiable truths, and narrative constructs, is imperative for the efficacy of democratic governance.

Samaila (2021) conducted research on 'Speech act analysis of the dialogues in Henshaw's *This is Our Chance*'. This research centres on dissecting the dialogues present in the text to discern their employed functions. The study leverages the speech act theory initially formulated by J. L. Austin, subsequently expanded upon by J. R. Searle. The study's findings indicate that various speech acts, including Directives, Representatives, Expressives, Declarations, and Commissive, are utilized throughout the text. Among these, certain speech acts are notably prevalent, while others are more sparingly utilized within the narrative.

Bestman (2021) undertook research on 'Speech act analysis of Dame Patience Jonathan's speeches'. The primary objective of this research was to discern the various categories of speech acts present in the selected speeches of Dame Patience Jonathan and to gauge their impact on the country's citizens. The analysis drew upon Searle's speech act theory. The study identified several types of speech acts utilized in the speeches, including Declarative, Representative, Commissive, Directive, and Expressive. The researcher's conclusion pointed to a lack of success in achieving the intended outcomes of the speeches among citizens, leading to a predominantly negative public reaction.

Upon reviewing the various analyses, it becomes evident that none of the researchers have conducted a study focusing on the speech act analysis of Toni Morrison's "Beloved." Furthermore, it is notable that the researcher has familiarized herself with the data scrutinized by diverse scholars in distinct areas.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Speech act theory is a framework within linguistics and philosophy that explores how language is not only used to convey information but also to perform various types of actions. It focuses on the idea that when people communicate, they are not just transmitting information, but they are also engaging in a variety of actions, such as making requests, giving orders, making promises, expressing opinions, and more. In essence, speech act theory delves into the relationship between language and action. It provides a way to analyse the different layers of meaning in communication and to understand how the intended meaning of an utterance can go beyond its literal or grammatical meaning.

The history of speech act theory can be traced back to ancient philosophical and linguistic inquiries about the nature of language and communication. Philosophers and linguists have long been interested in the relationship between language and action. Philosophers like Aristotle discussed how language could be used to perform actions. However, the modern formulation and development of speech act theory gained significant momentum in the mid-20th century, particularly with the works of philosophers and linguists like J.L. Austin and John Searle.

Austin, a British philosopher, is considered one of the pioneers of speech act theory. In his influential work "How to Do Things with Words," published posthumously in 1962, he introduced the concept of "illocutionary acts" to describe the performative function of language. He categorized speech acts into three components: locutionary acts (utterances with a literal meaning), illocutionary acts (the intentions behind the utterance, such as asserting, requesting, commanding, etc.), and perlocutionary acts (the effects or reactions produced by the utterance).

Building upon Austin's work, Searle, an American philosopher, further developed and systematized speech act theory. He introduced the concept of "speech act conditions," which are the necessary conditions for a speech act to be successful. Searle also expanded on the categories of illocutionary acts (Representatives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declarations) and introduced the concept of "indirect speech acts" in 1975. His proposition is, in an indirect speech act, the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says, by way of relying on their mutually shared information, both linguistic and non-linguistic. It is a linguistic phenomenon where the speaker conveys a message or performs a particular speech act (such as making a request, giving an order, or asking a question) in a way that the literal meaning of the words used does not directly match the intended illocutionary force or purpose. In other words, the speaker uses language in a way that requires the listener to infer the intended meaning beyond the surface-level interpretation of the words. For example, consider the sentence, "It's getting cold in here." On the surface, this statement might appear to be a simple observation about the temperature. However, in the context of someone shivering or wearing a light sweater, the intended illocutionary force might actually be a request to close a window or adjust the thermostat. The indirectness lies in the fact that the speaker does not directly ask for the action but implies it through the statement.

Indirect speech acts often involve implicature, where the speaker intends to communicate something beyond the literal meaning of the words. Understanding indirect speech acts requires the listener to recognize the context, the

relationship between the interlocutors, and the social norms governing communication.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology employed to analyse the use of indirect speech acts in Toni Morrison's novel "Beloved". Drawing upon Searle's speech act theory, the researcher identifies and categorizes various types of indirect speech acts such as hints, implicatures, and presuppositions. The objective of this research is to explore how characters in the novel utilize indirect speech acts to convey meaning, and to investigate the thematic and narrative significance of these instances.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analyse the nuances of indirect speech acts in "Beloved." Qualitative analysis allows for an in-depth examination of the contextual, linguistic, and pragmatic aspects of these instances. Through close textual analysis, the research seeks to uncover layers of meaning beyond the surface level of language.

The primary data source for this research is Toni Morrison's novel "Beloved." To ensure comprehensive coverage, the novel is divided into chapters, and significant sections are identified for analysis. 25 instances of indirect speech acts are identified through a systematic reading of the selected sections. Instances are chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives and their potential to contribute to the understanding of characters' motivations, relationships, and thematic elements.

#### V. ANALYSIS

Authors use indirect speech acts in their writing for various reasons, as these linguistic devices add depth, nuance, and complexity to both dialogue and narrative. Indirect speech acts often occur as metaphors, simile, repetition, implicature, euphemism, symbolism, sarcasm etc. helping the interlocutors in conveying intended meaning without directly doing so. 25 speech acts from the novel are analysed as below

1.1. "For a baby she throws a powerful spell," said Denver.

"No more powerful than the way I loved her," Sethe answered (p. 5).

Explanation: This utterance is representative which functions as an expressive. The utterance that Sethe utters is quite ironic because she says that although her baby ghost is throwing a powerful spell, it is not more than how much she loved her. However, she was the one who killed her own daughter.

1.2. "You got company?" he whispered

"Off and on," said Sethe.

"Good God." He backed out the door onto the porch. "What kind of evil you got in here?" (p. 10).

Explanation: This utterance is representative which functions as an expressive. When Paul D entered Sethe's house, he felt the presence of supernatural being in the house so he asks Sethe sarcastically if she got any company, which is obviously the ghost of her dead baby daughter.

1.3. "Won't you stay on awhile? Can't nobody catch up on eighteen years in a day." (p. 13).

Explanation: This utterance is representative which functions as a directive. When Sethe met Paul D, her co-worker back at the Sweet Home, she had a lot to catch up with him as it's been eighteen years since she has seen her husband Halle, or any of the sweet home men. She indirectly requests Paul D to stay.

1.4. "They used cowhide on you?"

"And they took my milk."

"They beat you and you was pregnant?"

"And they took my milk!" (p. 20).

Explanation: This utterance is representative which functions as an expressive. When Sethe was explaining how pupils of schoolteacher came and took her milk, Paul D was in utter shock and couldn't believe. He couldn't believe that those people beat her and used cowhide on her when she was pregnant. But for Sethe, being beaten was nothing compared to how they took her milk away. The use of repetition "And they took my milk" with the exclamation mark in the end shows the intensity of the trauma Sethe had to undergo because of it. The same line is repeated quite a few times throughout the text.

1.5. "But I mean we want to get married."

"You just said so. And I said all right."

"Is there a wedding?"

"You are one sweet child." (p. 31).

Explanation: This utterance is representative which functions as an expressive. When Sethe goes to Mrs. Garner to tell her that she and Halle are planning to get married, she easily agrees saying that Halle's nice and he'll be good to her. But Sethe again repeats the same sentence because she thought there should be something like ceremony or feast if they are getting married. So, she asks, "Is there a wedding?" But instead of saying yes or no, Mrs. Garner uses implicature and says "you are one sweet child", indirectly

refusing Sethe's request. Mrs. Garner thinks that Sethe is too naïve to think that there will be any ceremony for the slaves.

1.6. "I like to die I'm so hungry." The girl moved her eyes slowly, examining the greenery around her. "Thought there'd be huckleberries. Look like it. That's why I come up in here. Didn't expect to find no nigger woman. If they were any, birds ate them. You like huckleberries?"

"I'm having a baby, miss."

Amy looked at her. "That mean you don't have no appetite? Well, I got to eat me something." (p. 39).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. Sethe is pregnant and is running from the Sweet Home, her condition is worst. At that time, she encounters a white girl named Amy. Sethe desperately needed help in her condition because she was laying on the floor and couldn't get up as she was injured as well. But the girl, Amy, instead of helping her, uses **implicature** to avoid getting entangled in black woman's business. So, when Sethe says that she's having a baby, instead of offering help, Amy utters above sentence to **avoid** the subject.

1.7. "It's gonna hurt, now," said Amy. "Anything dead coming back to life hurts." (p. 42).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. Sethe's legs were swollen and worsen to the extent that she doesn't feel pain in it anymore. They were on the verge of dying. The white girl Amy started massaging her feet in order to revive them. At that time, she utters the above sentence. This sentence is also an example of **foreshadow** as when Beloved comes back from the dead, it causes a lot of pain to Sethe

1.8. "Whitepeople better here than Kentucky but you may have to scramble some."

"It ain't whether I scramble; it's where. You saying it's all right to scramble here?"

"Better than all right." (p. 50).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as a **directive**. When Paul D expresses his wish of looking for work around where Sethe lives, Sethe is happy as she explains him how this place is way better than the one they used to work earlier. Sethe wants Paul D to stay, but instead of directly saying so, she uses **indirectness to request** him to stay.

1.9. "Schoolteacher found you?"

"Took a while, but he did. Finally."

“And he didn’t take you back?”

“Oh, no. I wasn’t going back there. I don’t care who found who. Any life but not that one. I went to jail instead. Denver was just a baby so she went right along with me.” (p. 50).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. When Sethe is telling Paul D about how schoolteacher found her after she ran away from the Sweet Home, Paul D was surprised that he didn’t take Sethe back. In reality, schoolteacher did come to take Sethe and her children back but as he saw that Sethe killed her own daughter in front of him, he thought that Sethe has gone wild and left her as it is. But Sethe doesn’t specify to Paul D what exactly happened, instead, she uses above **euphemistic expression** that she went to jail, without actually telling him the reason of her going to jail.

1.10. “Is there history to her question?”

“History? What you mean?”

“I mean, did she have to ask that, or want to ask it, of anybody else before me?” (p. 53).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. Denver didn’t like Paul D staying at their place as he chased away the baby ghost the moment he came to the house, which was the only company Denver had. She directly asked Paul D how long he’s going to hang around. Sethe didn’t like the way Denver reacted and scolded her making her go into the bedroom, at that time Paul D uses the above **rhetorical question** as an **implicature** by indirectly asking her whether she was involved with any other man before him.

1.11. “He couldn’t get out the loft.”

“Loft? What loft?”

“The one over your head. In the barn.”

“He saw?”

“He saw.”

“He saw?”

“He saw. Must have.” (p. 81).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. When Paul D explains to Sethe why Halle was not able to run away with Sethe, she realises that when those pupils were pinning her down and taking away her milk, Halle, her husband was up in the loft all that time and he watched the whole incident with his own eyes. When Sethe realises this, she utters above sentence thrice. **Repetition** of the **rhetoric question** “He saw?” indicates the trauma and

shock Sethe goes through after realising that her husband saw her rape.

1.12. “Mister, he looked so.....free. Better than me. Stronger, tougher. Son of a bitch couldn’t even get out the shell by himself but he was still king and I was.....” (p. 86)

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. Here, Mister is the name of rooster that was back at the Sweet Home. Paul D was the one who saved it from dying by taking it out of its shell. But one day he saw that Mister roaming around and sitting like a king, he realised his worth was less than that of a rooster. This expression serves as **the quest for identity**, because being slave, the value of Paul D was even less than that of an animal. It was free and strong like a king, whereas Paul D was weak and helpless.

1.13. Denver whispered, “Why you call yourself Beloved?”

Beloved closed her eyes. “In the dark my name is Beloved.” (p. 88).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. Beloved is actually dead daughter of Sethe. Her name is Beloved because Sethe wrote her name as Beloved on her graveyard. When she appears at Sethe’s home and introduces herself as Beloved, Denver asks her why her name is Beloved, at that time Beloved utters above sentence. Here, ‘the dark’ is a **symbol** used for ‘the other side’ or ‘grave’.

1.14. “It’s a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here’s the trunk- it’s red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here’s the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves too, look like, and dern if these ain’t blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom.” (p. 93)

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. When the white girl Amy was tending injuries of Sethe, Sethe said her back hurt. Amy told her to turn over and when she saw Sethe’s back, she said, “Jesus” and kept quite for a while. After a halt, she uttered the above sentence. Here, she uses **metaphor**. The chokecherry tree that she is describing is actually bruise caused due to whipping. Amy says that it’s in bloom that means the bruises are still fresh and many.

1.15. “That better? Lord what a way to die. You gonna die in here, you know. Ain’t no way out of it. Thank your Maker I come along so’s you wouldn’t have to die outside in them weeds.



Snake come along he bite you. Bear eat you up. Maybe you should of stayed where you was, Lu. I can see by your back why you didn't ha ha. Whoever planted that tree beat Mr. Buddy by a mile. Glad I ain't you." (p. 94)

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. The white girl Amy saves Sethe's life. If not for her, Sethe would have died a horrible death. After looking at the bruises caused by the whipping that look like a tree, she says that it would have been better if Sethe had stayed at the place where she came from. But then she **sarcastically** makes a remark that she can see by Sethe's back why she didn't, and she laughs as well. It indicates that Sethe ran away even though she was in worst condition just to save herself and her baby from the schoolmaster. It shows the inhuman treatment she used to get as a slave.

- 1.16. "Lay em down, Sethe. Sword and shield. Down. Down. Both of em down. Down by the riverside. Sword and Shield. Don't study war no more. Lay all that mess down. Sword and shield." (p. 101).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as a **directive**. Sethe is recalling her mother-in-law – Baby Suggs- how she used to relax her by molding her nape and advising her that it's okay to let the guard down sometimes. Here Baby Suggs uses **metaphor** to advise her. Sword and shield are referred to as attack and defence. Being slave, Sethe's life was constant battle even if she ran away from the Sweet Home.

- 1.17. "Those white things have taken all I had or dreamed and broke my heartstrings too." said Baby Suggs. (p. 104).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**.

Baby Suggs was complaining how white people have ruined her life. She had eight children but she knows only one- Halle, the rest she had no information about- whether dead or alive. Enduring the torture by white people, She lived a miserable life as a slave . Because of them she even lost her granddaughter and her house- 124 was shut down. No one used to visit them like before. She blames everything to white people. She uses **metaphor**. White things here means white people.

- 1.18. "What I'm gonna wear?"

The old man sighed and, after a pause, said, "You want it back, then go ahead and take it off that

baby. Put the baby naked in the grass and put your coat back on. And if you can do it, then go on 'way somewhere and don't come back." (p. 107). Explanation: This utterance is **directive** which functions as an **expressive**. When Sethe travelled in a boat and arrived in Ohio in unconscious state, she didn't have any proper clothes, nor her baby whom she just delivered. The baby was wrapped around her chest. When Stamp Paid, who was at the bank of river saw this, after inquiring Sethe about some things, he asked the boy who was working with him to take off his coat. He took the coat and wrapped the naked baby in it. At that time the boy asked what he's gonna wear. To this, Stamp Paid got angry and **sarcastically** uttered above statement. Sarcastically he asked the boy to take the coat off of baby if he wants and never come back, because if the boy has some sympathy towards the baby, he'll understand that coat is necessary for baby more than him.

- 1.19. "Didn't your mother get locked away for murder? Wasn't you in there with her when she went?" (p. 123).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. Denver used to go to Lady Jones' house for learning. Nobody used to talk with her. But one day, a boy named Nelson Lord used above **rhetorical question**, not to ask something but to confirm his curiosity. The whole incident of killing baby daughter was traumatic for Sethe's whole family, therefore after this question, Denver went deaf rather than hearing its answer from Sethe. And she stopped going to Lady Jones' house as well.

- 1.20. "What you did was wrong, Sethe."

"I should have gone on back there? Taken my babies back there?"

"There should have been a way. Some other way." "What way?"

"You got two feet, Sethe, not four"

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as a **directive**. The subtext is loaded with emotion and history. Paul D's initial statement reflects his moral judgment on Sethe's decision to kill her child to protect her from a life of slavery. Sethe's response reveals the emotional turmoil she faced, highlighting her desperation and her understanding of the choices she made. Their dialogue conveys guilt, pain, and trauma **indirectly**, allowing readers to infer the depth of their feelings. The phrase "You got two feet, Sethe, not four" holds **symbolic** significance. It

suggests that Sethe is not an animal and has the ability to take control of her own life and make choices, regardless of the difficulties she faces.

- 1.21. "What I have to do is get in my bed and lay down. I want to fix on something harmless in this world."

"What world you're talking about? Ain't nothing harmless down here."

"Yes it is. Blue. That don't hurt nobody. Yellow neither." (p. 211).

Explanation: This utterance is **commisive** which functions as an **expressive**. The dialogue seems to revolve around finding comfort and solace in a seemingly harsh world. Baby Suggs expresses a desire to find something harmless to focus on, likely as a way to **escape** or cope with the difficulties of life. Stamp Paid, however, holds a more cynical perspective, suggesting that nothing in the world is truly harmless. The reference to colours like blue and yellow might **symbolize** moments of beauty or tranquillity amidst the chaos. Overall, the conversation touches on themes of seeking relief from life's challenges and the differing perspectives on what is considered harmless in the world.

- 1.22. "You saying the white folks won? That what you saying?"

"I'm saying they came in my yard."

"You saying nothing counts?"

"I'm saying they came in my yard."

"Sethe's the one did it."

"And if she hadn't?"

"You saying God give up? Nothing left for us but pour out our own blood?"

"I'm saying they came in my yard." (p. 211).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. The dialogue revolves around the themes of trauma, guilt, and the weight of history. They are discussing Sethe's actions, referring to her killing her own child to prevent her from being taken back into slavery. The dialogue touches on the idea of agency in the face of oppression, the role of divine intervention, and the ongoing struggle against the effects of slavery. The **repetition** of the line "I'm saying they came in my yard" could **symbolize** the intrusion of outside forces into one's personal life and the constant reminder of the traumatic past's impact.

- 1.23. "You all was friends."

"Yeah, till she showed herself."

"Ella."

"I ain't got no friends take a handsaw to their own children."

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. The conversation revolves around the strained relationship between Ella and Sethe. The exchange highlights the betrayal and shock felt by Ella upon learning about Sethe's act of killing her own child. The phrase "till she showed herself" suggests that Ella's perception of Sethe changed drastically after discovering what Sethe had done. The use of the handsaw as a **symbol** of violence and the mention of "take a handsaw to their own children" underscores the deeply disturbing nature of Sethe's actions.

- 1.24. "I can't read. You got any more newspaper for me, just a waste of time." (p. 271).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. After Stamp Paid showed a cutting of newspaper to Paul D describing what Sethe did to her own daughter, Paul D confronted Sethe, they quarrelled and Paul D left the place. He started to live in the cellar of the church. When Stamp Paid understood about this situation, he regretted telling about Sethe to Paul D. He went to church to meet Paul D and apologize to him. When Paul D saw him, he **sarcastically** uttered above statement because he had resentment towards Stamp Paid for revealing the past of Sethe and ruining their relationship.

- 1.25. "Sethe, it's me and you. We got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."

"You, your best thing, Sethe. You are"

"Me? Me?" (p. 322).

Explanation: This utterance is **representative** which functions as an **expressive**. The conversation captures themes of identity, love, trauma, and the lasting effects of slavery. The phrase "your best thing" implies that Sethe's true worth lies in her spirit, her ability to endure, and her capacity to love. This contrasts with conventional ideas of physical beauty or societal status. The **repetition** of "Me? Me?" in the third line indicates Sethe's surprise and perhaps disbelief at receiving such praise, especially considering the trials she has faced. It indicates **identity crisis**. She considers her children to be best thing because they are not violated by white people as she was, but Paul D saying you are your best thing makes her question her worth. This moment highlights the struggle many characters

face in reconciling their sense of self-worth after experiencing the dehumanizing effects of slavery.

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## VI. CONCLUSION

The research focused on the selected indirect speech acts in Toni Morrison's 'Beloved'. Morrison's writing is rich with symbolism, metaphor, and layered dialogue, which can be seen as a form of indirect communication. Highly marked 25 instances of indirect speech acts were analysed for this study. The speeches were analysed using Indirect Speech Act Theory proposed by Searle. With the use of this theory, the research work finds out the types of speech act that existed in dialogues of the novel 'Beloved'. Although all 5 types of speech acts are used throughout the novel, only few are reflected in the selected dialogues for the research. These include: representative speech act, commissive speech act, directive speech act, and expressive speech act. Representative speech acts ranked first with 23 examples whereas directive and commissive speech acts ranked second with one example each. These indirect speech acts are used to convey complex emotions, communicate underlying meanings, and reflect the characters' internal struggles. In "Beloved," indirect speech acts contribute to the novel's poetic and introspective nature, helping to create a multi-layered narrative that explores themes of identity, trauma, memory, and healing. This research paper agrees with the power of indirect speech acts in revealing the unspoken complexities of characters' lives and their interactions. The paper underscores the importance of recognizing the subtleties of communication as a crucial element in understanding the novel's themes and characters.

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